

Message Text

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14

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMEMBASSY MADRID

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4650

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LISBON

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM

AMEMBASSY OSLO

USMISSION NATO

USEC BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, SP

SUBJECT: KING JUAN CARLOS I VISIT TO CATALONIA

1. KING JUAN CARLOS I BEGAN FIVE-DAY VISIT FEB 16 TO CATALONIA, SPAIN'S RICHEST REGION BUT ONE WITH MOST WIDESPREAD REGIONAL FEELINGS BASED ON THE COMMONLY USED CATALAN LANGUAGE. HE IS ACCOMPANIED BY PREMIER, MINISTER OF INTERIOR FRAGA AND MINISTER OF PRESIDENCY OSORIO AND OTHER MINISTERS IN ACCORDANCE WITH PROGRAM.

2. TONE OF VISIT WAS SET BY KING WHEN, IN HIS ARRIVAL STATE-
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MENT, HE INCLUDED A PARAGRAPH WHICH HE SPOKE IN CATALAN.

CATALAN ASPIRATIONS WERE BROUGHT UP EARLY BY PRESIDENT OF BARCELONA ASSEMBLY, SAMARANCH, WHO SAID THAT VISIT CAME AT OPPORTUNE TIME WHEN CATALAN PEOPLE ARE HOPEFUL TO HAVE THEIR "CULTURAL, ADMINISTRATIVE, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL PERSONALITY RECOGNIZED". ABBOT OF MONSERRAT MONASTRY, THE CATALAN NATIONAL RELIGIOUS SHRINE, TOLD KING IN CATALAN SERMON COUNTRY'S NEED WAS FOR RECONCILIATION IN PEACE, AMNESTY, AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

3. IN HIS VARIOUS APPEARANCES SO FAR JUAN CARLOS HAS ACCENTED THE NEED FOR UNITY AND A COLLECTIVE EFFORT TO BUILD AN AUTHENTIC DEMOCRACY WITH MORE EFFECTIVE FREEDOMS AND JUSTICE. HE WARNED AGAINST THOSE WHO WOULD TRY TO PERPETUATE "EXCLUSIVE" PRIVILEGES AND PREJUDICE THE WEAKEST MEMBERS OF SOCIETY. IN LERIDA, WHERE LOCAL OFFICIALS ASKED HIM FOR ASSISTANCE IN A NUMBER OF LOCAL ISSUES, THE KING PROMISED TO TURN COPIES OF THEIR SPEECHES OVER TO THE PREMIER FOR ACTION. "THERE IS TO BE NO BARRIER BETWEEN THE KING AND THE PEOPLE," HE SAID.

4. TWO CABINET MEETINGS ARE REPORTEDLY SCHEDULED FOR FEB 20 IN BARCELINA, ONE TO BE CHAIRED BY THE KING AND WHICH WOULD DECIDE ON ISSUES DIRECTLY RELEVANT TO CATALONIAN INTERESTS, AND THE OTHER TO BE CHAIRED BY ARIAS TO DEAL WITH NATIONAL ISSUES. THIS GESTURE -- ANOTHER INSTANCE OF SPANISH EMULATION OF FRENCH PRECEDENTS -- IS PRESUMABLY CALCULATED TO ASSUAGE CATALAN FEELINGS THAT THEIR REGION IS INSUFFICIENTLY REPRESENTED IN THE GOVT AND NEGLECTED BY MADRID.

5. ACCORDING TO AMCONGEN BARCELONA, CATALAN POPULACE HAS RESPONDED ENTHUSIASTICALLY TO KING'S VISIT EVEN THOUGH CATALAN LEADERS OBVIOUSLY FEEL THAT GOVT HAS PROCEEDED TOO SLOWLY WITH POLITICAL REFORMS. KING'S ITINERARY HAS BEEN ARRANGED SO THAT HE HAS NOT WITNESSED DEMONSTRATIONS INVOLVING STRIKING MUNICIPAL WORKERS AND CONSTRUCTION WORKERS (SEPTTEL). VISIT HAS SO FAR BEEN SUCCESSFUL PUBLIC RELATIONS GAMBIT FOR KING HIMSELF AND AS PALPABLE SIGN OF GOVT'S CONCERN FOR REGIONAL ISSUE.

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STABLER

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